



## Course report 2019

Subject	Economics
Level	National 5

This report provides information on candidates' performance. Teachers, lecturers and assessors may find it useful when preparing candidates for future assessment. The report is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment documents and marking instructions.

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any post-results services.

# **Section 1: comments on the assessment**

## **Question paper**

The question paper performed as expected. All candidates completed the paper within the given time.

## **Assignment**

The assignment performed as expected. There was a very broad range of topics this year, some topics had only one entry for the entire cohort and some topics were very popular, including the sugar tax, the tourist tax, the depreciating £ sterling, and Brexit.

## **Section 2: comments on candidate performance**

### **Areas that candidates performed well in**

#### **Question paper**

Question 1(b): Measures to reduce cost of production were well known.

Question 1(d): Steps used to measure inflation were well described.

Question 1(g): Scottish imports and exports were well known.

Question 2(a)(i): The term 'multinational' was well described.

Question 2(d): Examples of indirect taxes were well known.

Question 2(e): Capital and current government expenditure were well known.

Question 3(c)(i): Opportunity cost was well defined.

Question 3(c)(ii): Good examples of opportunity cost were given.

Questions 4(b)(i),(ii),(iii): Effects of determinants of supply were well known.

Question 6(a): Unemployment was well defined.

Question 7(a): The difference in US\$ was calculated well.

#### **Assignment**

Candidates who followed the guidelines in the coursework assessment task generally performed well. The most accessible sections continue to be the introduction, research, the findings element of findings, analysis and interpretation, and the structure and presentation section.

## Areas that candidates found demanding

### Question paper

Question 1(e): Many candidates found it hard to explain why rising oil prices can cause inflation. Many gave a general answer about the effects of rising inflation.

Question 2(a)(ii): Many candidates did not take into account that most European multinationals would be based in the EU, and therefore would already be within the single market and thus gave answers about trade barriers and the Common External Tariff which were irrelevant.

Question 2(a)(iii): Many candidates did not take into account that the question asked about reasons for high revenues for American multinationals, rather than general reasons for American multinationals locating in the UK.

Question 3(a): Many candidates could name sources of finance but could not describe them.

Question 4(a): Many candidates drew diagrams with a shift in demand rather than an extension and a contraction.

Question 4(c): Several candidates drew a market diagram rather than a diagram showing the effect on supply.

Question 6(b)(ii): Many candidates could not describe structural unemployment.

Question 6(c): Several candidates gave 'low' growth, rather than 'negative' growth as a characteristic of a recession.

Question 6(d): Several candidates did not relate their answer on a rise in the retirement age back to the effects on economic growth.

Question 7(c): Many candidates knew about aid given to developing countries but failed to explain how the measures could increase economic growth.

### Assignment

Some candidates gave a series of facts in their introduction section which they then repeated as findings in the 'findings, analysis and interpretation' section. In these cases marks were awarded only once, in the section that was most advantageous to the candidate.

In the research section some candidates only stated the value of the information rather than explaining its value. For example, stating the value of the information, '*it is up to date*'. A mark is only given if the value is explained, for example '*because it was published in January 2019*'.

In the 'findings, analysis and interpretation' section some candidates gave findings, for example from a newspaper article, and then copied the analysis that the newspaper writer had given. Those candidates were only awarded the mark as a 'finding', although it may appear to be 'finding and analysis'.

A small number of candidates are still putting their theory points under a discrete heading, rather than integrating it in the 'findings, analysis and interpretation' section. In these instances candidates are awarded no marks for their economic theory.

## Section 3: preparing candidates for future assessment

### Question paper

Centres should ensure that candidates recognise what is being asked of them in questions involving diagrams. If a question asks for a 'demand' diagram, then a demand curve should be the start point. Similarly, if a question asks for a 'supply' diagram, then a supply curve should be the start point. If a question asks for a 'market' diagram, then both a demand and a supply curve should be given in the original diagram. As marks are normally given for labels, candidates should make sure that all axes, curves, price/cost, quality/output and equilibrium points are marked, if appropriate.

When asked to include a diagram, candidates should use about a third of a page for each diagram and write below the diagram, rather than beside it. This ensures that markers can see the diagram and all labels clearly.

Centres should ensure that candidates are familiar with what type of response is required for each of the command words. For example, if candidates are asked to 'draw' a diagram, then no text is required, however if candidates are asked to 'explain, using a diagram' then text is required in addition to the diagram.

When asked to define or describe terms, candidates should not use the question words in the definition. For example 'seasonal unemployment' should not be defined by saying it is '*due to the season*'; 'global trade' should not be defined by saying it is '*trade which ...*', or it is imports and exports which take place '*around the globe*'.

When asked a question within a context, candidates should provide the answer within the context. For example, determinants of demand for electric cars should be relevant to electric cars and factors of production for a software design firm should relate to software design.

Centres should make sure that candidates are aware that the name of the survey that is carried out to collect information on household spending patterns when measuring inflation is now called the living costs and food survey, and no longer called the family expenditure survey.

When candidates give examples of capital expenditure they should use verbs, for example say '*building schools*' or '*refurbishing hospitals*' rather than just '*schools*' or '*hospitals*'. This makes it absolutely clear that candidates do not mean '*cleaning schools*' or '*staffing hospitals*' etc.

### Assignment

Centres should give guidance to candidates about the validity of some of their sources of information. For example in 2019 when candidates wrote about the sugar tax (the soft drinks industry levy) they were referring to articles which had been written in 2016 (when the sugar tax legislation was announced but yet not enacted). These articles predicted the effect of the sugar tax on the behaviour of consumers, but most candidates said that this was how consumers had reacted. Given that the sugar tax is now no longer new, if candidates are

going to write about this topic they should be finding more up-to-date information which covers what the effect has actually been.

Candidates should not use 'media-speak' or superlative adjectives in their report. For example, if writing about the impact of something, candidates should not be using words such as 'devastating', 'ginormous', 'massive', 'huge', 'vast' etc.

Candidates often get confused or confuse the reader when writing about imports and exports. One way to ensure clarity is always to use a geographical term every time that imports or exports are mentioned, for example UK exports, UK imports, EU exports, US imports.

Candidates should be clear which term they mean when they write about profits and/or revenue, and costs and/or price, and use the correct terminology.

If candidates give a date for something, they should always include the year, for example saying that the Brexit vote took place on 23 June is not meaningful to the reader, whereas saying that the vote took place on 23 June 2016 is.

If candidates use diagrams in their reports it is easier to read if the diagram is enlarged to take up the width of the page, or is formatted to 'top and bottom' rather than having text to the left or right of the diagram. Candidates should also give any diagram a title.

In relation to the flyleaf, candidates should remember to insert their word count. The flyleaf states that the maximum word count is 1,300 words. There is a +10% allowance, so the word count could be as high as 1,430, although this should be the exception and not be used by the majority of candidates. There is no minimum word count, although candidates may disadvantage themselves if they write significantly fewer than the stated 1,300 words.

## Grade boundary and statistical information:

### Statistical information: update on courses

Number of resulted entries in 2018	277
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Number of resulted entries in 2019	268
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### Statistical information: performance of candidates

#### Distribution of course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of course awards	Percentage	Cumulative %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
<b>Maximum mark</b>				
<b>A</b>	64.9%	64.9%	174	84
<b>B</b>	16.0%	81.0%	43	72
<b>C</b>	9.7%	90.7%	26	60
<b>D</b>	6.7%	97.4%	18	48
<b>No award</b>	2.6%	-	7	-



## General commentary on grade boundaries

SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.

SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions that allow:

- ◆ a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary)
- ◆ a well-prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary)

It is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.

Therefore, SQA holds a grade boundary meeting every year for each subject at each level to bring together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The principal assessor and SQA qualifications manager meet with the relevant SQA head of service and statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. Members of the SQA management team chair these meetings. SQA can adjust the grade boundaries as a result of the meetings. This allows the pass rate to be unaffected in circumstances where there is evidence that the question paper has been more, or less, challenging than usual.

- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the question paper is more challenging than usual.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.

Grade boundaries from question papers in the same subject at the same level tend to be marginally different year to year. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for question papers set by centres. If SQA alters a boundary, this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter their boundary in the question papers that they set themselves.